GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINES
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3537
ANSWERED ON:23.03.2017
Illegal Mining of Minerals
Senguttuvan Shri Balasubramaniam

Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the advanced mining surveillance to keep track of illegal mining of minerals has unearthed more than 14 lakh tonnes of raw and semi-processed sand illegally mined and stored in Tirunelveli region of Tamil Nadu and if so, the details thereof;
(b) Whether nearly 2 lakh tones of beach sand minerals have been illegally mined in the said region and exported to foreign countries through Tuticorin port during the last three years and if so, the details thereof;
(c) Whether any private mineral firms are involved therein and if so, the details thereof and the action taken thereon;
(d) Whether any of these mineral firms is situated within the coastal Regulatory Zone and are illegally extracting water from the restricted zone for their industrial operations , and if so, the details thereof; and
(e) The preventive steps to be initiated to curb the illegal mining/extraction?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR POWER, COAL, NEW & RENEWABLE ENERGY AND MINES (SHRI PIYUSH GOYAL)

(a) to (e): Section 23C of Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act 1957, devolves on the State Governments, the full responsibility to frame rules to prevent illegal mining. Under the section 23C, the State Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, make such rules for preventing illegal mining, transportation and storage of minerals and for the purposes connected therewith.
The Mining Surveillance System (MSS) has been developed by Ministry of Mines through Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM) to facilitate the State Governments for curbing the incidences of illegal mining of major minerals. Out of total 8 triggers of possible illegal mining activity in Tirunelveli district, which were transferred to Government of Tamil Nadu for field verification, 2 triggers pertained to beach sand minerals.
The Government of Tamil Nadu has informed that the two triggers detected in Thirvambalapuram village and Vijayapathi village were inspected by the Deputy Director of Geology and Mining, Tirunelveli along with the Special Deputy Tahsildar (Mines) and other staff from 24.11.2016 to 10.12.2016. Raw sand unlawfully stored in the patta lands in Thiruvambalapuram Village and Vijayapathi Village of Radhapuram Taluk were detected.

The State Government has further informed that based on complaint petition on illegal / excess mining of beach sand minerals by private leases, the State Government vide G.O.(Ms)No.156, Industries Department, dated 08.08.2013 and G.O.(Ms)No.173, Industries Department, dated 17.09.2013 have ordered to inspect all beach sand mining leases granted to private players in Tiruneveli, Thoothukudi and Kanyakumari Districts by constitution a Special Team. This special team submitted report to State Government and pointed out various violations in mining leases including illegal mining of beach sand and violation of lease deed / environmental conditions. In this connection W.P.No.1592/2015 and W.A.No.1168 and 1169 of 2015 are pending before the Hon'ble High Court of Madras. The Hon'ble High Court have appointed an amicus curiae. Tiruneveli District Collector had submitted report on MSS to the Hon'ble High Court. The Hon'ble High Court in the order dated 22.2.2017 has directed the State Government to submit an action taken report on special team observations and further ordered formation of special squad to curtail illicit mining and transportation of beach sand in coastal districts of Tamil Nadu and directed formation of a team led by secretary level officer to inspect and assess the stocks available in various places. In this connection, the State Government is taking further necessary action. The matter is sub-judice.

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